

South Street Seaport Museum,
127-137 Beekman Street
(Livingston Building)
New York City
New York County
New York

HABS No. NY-5634

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PHOTOGRAPH

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

SOUTH STREET SEAPORT MUSEUM
127-137 BEEKMAN STREET
(Livingston Building)

HABS No. NY-5634

Location: 127-137 Beekman Street,
(Sometimes known as 208-210 Front Street
or 217 Water Street),
New York, New York County, New York.

Present Owner: New York City.
Lessee: South Street Seaport Museum.

Present Occupant: Inter-City Fish Company.

Present Use: Fish Market.

Significance: The only twentieth century building on the block,
127-237 Beekman Street is a large three-story cream-
colored brick warehouse with neo-classic details
designed by architect James S. Maher for Ruth Living-
ston in 1914. While still occupied by a large fish
company, the building is part of the South Street
Seaport Museum, a group of galleries, stores and
piers standing in close proximity to high rise office
buildings in Lower Manhattan.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1914.
2. Architect: James S. Maher designed this warehouse to be used for light storage for \$38,000.
3. Original and subsequent owners: In 1750, Water lot #7 was granted to Robert Livingston. It was part of the land between high and low water marks. Once filled, the land was designated Block 96W, Lots 2,3,4,5, 23,24. Today the property is included under lot 5. Information for the property records comes from New York City Conveyance Records, Surrogate's Court.

The following is incomplete chain of title for this property:

133 Beekman Street

<u>Date</u>	<u>Grantor</u>	<u>Grantee</u>
March 30, 1914	Liber 148; p. 210 Ruth Livingston	Blackford's Inc. <u>lease</u>
October 23, 1944	Liber 4314; p. 329 Bank of New York (Will of Ruth Livingston) for benefit Evelyn Burns also known as Ruth E.	Mary L. Buono
October 23, 1944	Liber 4314; p. 333 Mary L. Buono	Walker Realty Co. Inc.
July 7, 1969	Liber 145; p. 941 Delegate Realty Corp.	Seaport Holdings Inc.
June 20, 1973	Liber 282; p. 705 Seaport Holdings Inc.	New York City lots 1, 5, 6
June 20, 1973	Liber 282; p. 814 City of New York	South Street Seaport Museum
June 27, 1973	Liber 283; pp. 63,81 City of New York	Chase Manhattan Bank Not lotted: air rights transfer.

4. Original plans and construction: This simple three-story cream brick warehouse has changed very little since it was built in 1914. The New Building application #74 calls for a light storage warehouse of brick and cement mortar. The specifications call for terra cotta and gypsum partitions and a five-ply tar and gravel roof.
5. Alterations and additions: The first alteration took place in 1943, when Robert Gottlieb, architect, altered the interior to include a factory, Moore & Co. Soups, Inc., at a cost of \$200; a fish market shared the premises.

Two years later, a new elevator was installed as well as a new water closet, basin and two showers on the second floor. Alger Alfred Zulli, contractor, directed the job and also rearranged partitions on the second floor, and removed an accomodation stair between the first and second floor, etc. for a fee of \$5000.

- B. Historical Context: The Livingston family owned the lots upon which 127-137 Beekman Streets was built from the time it was a water lot in 1750 until 1944. According to Scoville, the Livingstons "were a good old race. They were exclusively New York... they were not ashamed to be merchants." The Livingstons are probably most well known for their patriotic activities during the American Revolution. Robert Livingston

first came to this country in 1676. His son, Philip, signed the Declaration of Independence and was one of the first governors elected in 1770 and reelected in 1777. Peter Van Bough Livingston (1710-1792), Philip's merchant brother, settled in New York City after college where he joined in the City's mercantile interests. Peter was also active in colonial New York politics. Maturin Livingston, owner of the property, before the 1914 building was constructed, served as the recorder of the city.

The first occupant of 127-137 Beekman Street was Blackford's, a fish firm.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The only twentieth century building on the block, 127-137 Beekman Street is a large three-story brick warehouse with neoclassical details designed by Architect James S. Maher.
2. Condition of fabric: Poor.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: Approximately 145' x 45'; eight-bay front; three stories; rectangular shape.
2. Foundations: Concrete.
3. Walls: Cream colored brick.
4. Structural system, framing: Reinforced concrete.
5. Awnings: Three metal awnings (two existing, one removed) project onto sidewalk from bays 3, 5 and 9.
6. Chimneys: One chimney, located in the south wall.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Entrance doors at northeast corner appear original- 3/4 glazed double doors with sidelights.
 - b. Windows: Double mullion window with fixed center sash and movable side sash- double hung and pivot, depending on location.
8. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: Parapet flat roof; built-up roll roofing.
 - b. Cornice, eaves: Sheet metal cornice with dentils. Pilaster capitals are also sheet metal.
 - c. Skylights: Skylights are located on roof above the two stair locations.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: Rectangular with center row of columns running parallel to front facade. Column spacing corresponds to bay location.

2. Stairways: Two enclosed interior stairwells with skylights, service all floors of the building. Their locations are in the northeast and southwest corners. A fire escape is located on the east facade.
3. Flooring: Concrete.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Concrete and plaster.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The building, a part of the South Street Seaport Museum, is located in a neighborhood of early New York commercial buildings standing in close proximity of high-rise office buildings in lower Manhattan.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

New York City Department of Buildings, Municipal Building and Val Wenzel Files, South Street Seaport Museum: New Building Application #375 (1943) 3rd floor plan available; #699 (1945) plan available; #1745 (1945) new elevator application, #1734 (1974).

New York City Conveyances, Surrogates Court.

Insurance Maps of the City of New York, 1914-1976, New York Historical Society.

New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission; Roberts, Lee and Steinke, Nancy, "Inventory of Structures in the Brooklyn Bridge S.E. Urban Renewal Area." New York, 1968, p. 8.

New York City Directories, New York Historical Society.

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Summer 1976

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Summer 1976
(architectural information)

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The South Street Seaport project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), under the direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS, with the co-operation of the South Street Seaport Museum, Inc. Recording was carried out during the summer of 1976 by Frederick W. Wiedenmann (HABS Washington D.C. office) project supervisor; Lori Zabar (Columbia University), project historian; Robert Lee Wiltse (Louisiana State University), architect; and student architects- Barry Lee Gill (North Dakota State University), Joe E. Price (Texas Tech University), and John R. Temmink (University of Virginia). Susan McCown, a HABS historian in the Washington, D.C. office, edited the written data in 1983, for transmittal to the Library of Congress. Walter Smalling, Jr. of the National Park Service took the photographs of the South Street Seaport structures.